

# Department Hosts Summit to Address Sexual Violence in Prisons

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Commissioner J. David Donahue



Photo Caption: (L) Commissioner J. David Donahue and PREA Commissioner Pat Nolan at the Summit.

Indianapolis, Indiana - (April 12, 2007) - On April 10, Commissioner J. David Donahue kicked off the Addressing Sexual Violence Summit at the Indiana War Memorial, in conjunction with Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAM). The summit focused on raising awareness about sexual violence. The theme for the 2007 conference was Silence is a Crime: Addressing Sexual Violence in Indiana Corrections: Prevention, Detection, Treatment and Adjudication.

"Sexual violence is preventable through effective collaboration, training and awareness" said Commissioner J. David Donahue. "Our position has to be zero tolerance as we continue to promote safety in our prisons. We must be in tune with the warning signs."

Over three hundred representatives from Indiana's state operated prisons and juvenile detention centers, parole districts, county sheriff's departments and services providers from across the state participated in this interactive Summit, designed to share information towards addressing sexual violence in Indiana correctional facilities.

"The presence of such a distinguished group of people indicates the seriousness with which we all see the issue of sexual violence in Indiana Corrections and the need to ensure that we, as a community, demand and defend a zero tolerance policy towards such violence," added J. David Donahue.

Keynote speaker, PREA Commissioner Pat Nolan addressed correctional professionals and service providers by stressing the importance of staff awareness in prisons - a vital national issue.

"You perform a valuable service as correctional professionals," said Nolan. "The challenge to you is that you can change the environment where you work and make it a better place for staff and offenders."

On September 4, 2003, President Bush signed into law the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003. The legislation requires the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) to develop a new national data collection on the incidence and prevalence of sexual assault within correctional facilities.

To address the violence locally, Indiana has established policy and procedures, trained staff department-wide, educated the offender population, designated Sexual Assault Awareness Program Coordinators at each facility and established a Prison Rape Oversight Group (PROG) whose main goal is to eliminate sexual violence within corrections.

The summit covered a range of topics including: A timeline of the response to sexual violence assault, roles in investigating sexual violence, treatment and dealing with the after effects, juvenile offenders. Topics included Surveillance Equipment, Identification and Placement of Potential Victims, Training Regarding Sexual Violence, and a New World View for Preventing Prison Sexual Violence.

In 2007, the Department was awarded the "Protecting Inmates and Safeguarding Communities Grant" from the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The grant is a result of the Prison Rape Elimination (PREA) Act of 2003, and is designed to support the State's efforts to prevent and eliminate prison rape between inmates in state and local prisons, jails and law enforcement lockup facilities and to safeguard communities where inmates return. This grant will provide funding for several projects and initiatives, including: GPS monitoring bracelets for 100 high-risk sex offenders; PREA training for statewide parole, Community Corrections, probation, and IDOC staff; purchase of surveillance equipment at certain IDOC Facilities; identification of community service providers who can offer counseling and other services to inmates/victims.

"Our collective goal is to eliminate sexual violence and to instill zero tolerance into the minds of staff and offenders; to change the culture of facilities, institutions, jails, detention centers statewide,"

concluded Donahue. "Remember, silence is a crime and it's our job to make a difference."

## **About The Department of Correction**

The Department employs over 8,000 employees and houses 24,000 adult and juveniles in 32 facilities, ranging from minimum to maximum custody, prison camps, juvenile facilities and work release centers. The Department's home page on the Internet can be found at: <http://www.in.gov/indcorrection>. The Department's Re-entry Site can be found: <http://www.reentry.in.gov>.